

Harmonious Thelonious

Cheapo Sounds

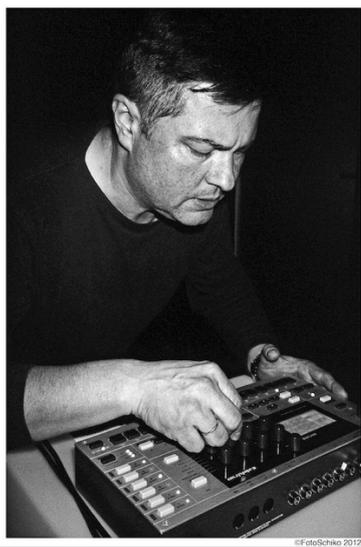


CD / LP / digital
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Tracklisting

- 1) Soft Opening Machine
- 2) Liquid Sound Waves
- 3) Limitations
- 4) M And A
- 5) Gummi Twist & Crawl
(Die Koffer sind leer)
- 6) Sunglasses
- 7) Orion Stars
- 8) Back From The
Primitive Galaxy
- 9) Cheapo Sounds
- 10) Afterhour



Promotion

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A pivotal figure in Düsseldorf's Salon Des Amateurs, Stefan Schwander has already amassed a remarkably rich musical repertoire. Through his Harmonious Thelonious project, he has spent the past dozen years exploring the worlds of Pan-African, South American and Middle Eastern rhythms in combination with a minimalistic electronic sound, distilling his very own groove from the point at which they converge. His new album - challengingly entitled "Cheapo Sounds" - sees Schwander move away from tried and trusted recipes.

This musical reorientation starts with the fundamental approach to production: the entire record was created using a single instrument - the Monomachine – which lends a very physical sound to the 10 tracks featured here. The polyrhythms of earlier works are no longer in the foreground, replaced by melodies and chords interwoven on a base frame of brittle, simplified beat constructs and rugged bass pulses.

On closer inspection, this is, at times, a new vision of an old technique. There are still the old amps in Schwander's rehearsal room, along with a primitive rhythm box, a programmable drum machine and various synthesizers, including an MS-20. None of these made it onto "Cheapo Sounds" and yet the idea with which these instruments are associated is written into the DNA of the album. When new wave superseded punk and the last throes of rockism, a new and particular spirit emerged, one which Stefan Schwander sought to capture on his new works. A new wave record informed by techno. His success in this venture brings us back to the elemental idea of the Harmonious Thelonious project: a form of dance music which, like a good club night, does not succumb to formulaic rigidity or generic expectations, but challenges the crowd, trading with jazz, krautrock, industrial, punk, dub and disco.

Stefan Schwander has never shown any interest in trends, but "Cheapo Sounds" and the ten pithy pieces contained therein, few of them exceeding the four minute mark, can arguably be considered an exceedingly modern record - in the best sense of the word. And even when the closing track "Afterhour" has played out, Schwander's mesmeric variations on minimalism still hang in the air, like quiet clouds of smoke.

- Daniel Jahn